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Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* Security Council extends MINURSO mandate until 31 May; expresses deep concern at stalemate in identification process and lack of progress in Settlement Plan.

* Security Council authorizes deployment of 100 military observers to Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium.

* Security Council calls on Sudan to extradite suspects wanted in assassination attempt on Egyptian President and to desist from assisting, supporting and facilitating terrorist activities.

* Secretary-General recommends UNPREDEP in former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia become an independent mission reporting directly to UN Headquarters in New York.

* International Commission of Inquiry finds strong indications that Rwandan elements in Zaire are being trained to conduct incursions into Rwanda.

* Special Representative for Rwanda says there are underlying tensions in country, despite superficial signs of normalcy.

* NGO Committee is told Amnesty International should expand its area of concern to socio-economic rights.

* Concern expressed at WHO meeting over shrinking resources for rehabilitation of disabled people.

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The Security Council today extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) until 31 May. In unanimously adopting resolution 1042 (1996), the Council expressed deep concern about the stalemate which has been hindering the identification process and the consequent lack of progress towards completion of the Settlement Plan.

The Council called upon the two parties -- the Moroccan Government and the

(more)

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POLISARIO Front -- to cooperate with the Secretary-General and MINURSO in resuming the identification process, overcoming obstacles hindering its completion and implementing all other aspects of the Settlement Plan. The parties were encouraged to consider additional ways to create confidence between themselves and to facilitate the Settlement Plan's implementation.

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Also today, the Security Council authorized the deployment of 100 military observers to serve for six months with the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES). In unanimously adopting resolution 1043 (1996), the Council considered a letter from the Secretary-General dated 19 January. He said the observers were needed to help UNTAES facilitate the demilitarization provided for in the Basic Agreement, which was signed on 12 November by the Croatian Government and the local Serb authorities.

In an addendum to his letter, the Secretary-General said he would recommend that Member States bear the cost of the observers, which he estimated at $2.3 million. The observers will identify units and equipment to be demilitarized and also report on any developments relevant to the maintenance of peace and security. On 15 January, the Security Council established UNTAES with an initial military component of up to 5,000 troops.

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The Security Council today called upon the Government of Sudan to comply, without delay, to a request by the Organization of African States (OAU), to extradite to Ethiopia, three suspects wanted in connection with the June 1995 assassination attempt in Addis Ababa on Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. It also called upon the Sudanese Government to desist from assisting, supporting and facilitating terrorist activities, and from sheltering or giving sanctuary to terrorist elements, and to act with its neighbours and others in conformity with the United Nations Charter and the OAU's Charter.

In unanimously adopting resolution 1044 (1996) the Council condemned the terrorist assassination attempt and deplored the flagrant violation of Ethiopia's sovereignty and integrity and the attempt to the disturb peace and security of the region. The Council commended Ethiopia's attempt to resolve the issue through bilateral and regional arrangements. It urged the international community to encourage Sudan to respond fully and effectively to the OAU requests. It asked the Secretary-General, in consultation with the OAU to seek the cooperation of Sudan and to report to the Council within 60 days.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has recommended that the United

Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia become an independent mission reporting directly to UN headquarters in New York. The Force has been one of three peace-keeping missions in the former Yugoslavia. In a report to the Security Council dated 30 January, the Secretary-General suggested the move become effective as of 1 February. He said UNPREDEP had been originally deployed to counter the impact of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia from engulfing other areas. Although there was now little evidence of a direct or immediate threat to the Republic, the effect of existing tensions had not completely abated nor the danger of fragmentation averted.

The Secretary-General pointed out that the Force had contributed to alleviating the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's serious concerns about external security threats and a continuation of its mission was important for peace and security in the region. He said that UNPREDEP had demonstrated that preventive deployment could work when there was political will, a clear mandate and purpose, and the necessary commitment by parties concerned.

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There were strong indications that certain Rwandan elements in Zaire were being trained to conduct incursions into Rwanda, according to a report by the International Commission of Inquiry investigating the illegal training and arming of former Rwandan government forces. In its interim report to the Security Council, dated 29 January, the Commission said the incursions were having a destabilising effect on the country. The Council established the Commission last September to investigate reports that former Rwandan Government officials in the Great Lakes region of Africa were receiving arms -- in violation of a Council arms embargo -- and were being trained to destabilize Rwanda.

Although it was not yet able to confirm allegations that arms, ammunition and related materiel were sold or supplied to former Rwandan government forces, the Commission said it believed that Rwandan men were receiving military training to conduct destabilizing raids into their country, specifically on Iwawa Island, Rwanda. The Commission said it was also not able to reliably establish that specific governments, companies or individuals had aided or abetted the sale or supply of arms and related materiel.

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Despite superficial signs of normalcy in Rwanda there were undercurrents of deep concern and a great deal of tension in the country, according to the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Rwanda, Shahryar Khan. He told correspondents today, that schools and businesses were operating and many homes, destroyed in the violence which shattered the country 18 months ago, had been rebuilt. However, departures from the cabinet and country by a former Prime Minister and other Ministers indicated deeper tensions. The recent beating of three members of the International Criminal Tribunal raised questions about the

Government's ability to ensure the security of United Nations personnel working throughout the country.

There were also tensions along the border with Zaire as a result of infiltration, sabotage and an arms build-up, mainly in the Zairian refugee camps, but also in Tanzania, he said. The Rwandan Government had over-reacted to suspected saboteurs and news that innocent people were arrested had circulated in the camps and was affecting the voluntary return of refugees. Co-existence and tolerance could only begin if a large number of the 1.5 to 1.8 million refugees returned home to live peacefully, but that had not happened despite efforts by the humanitarian agencies.

On a positive note, 69 percent of the one billion dollars pledged by the international community for reconstruction in Rwanda had been disbursed, although the Government claimed too much aid was going to non-governmental organizations and criminals in the camps rather than the victims of genocide, Mr. Khan said. Justice was most important to allay fears that the forces of revenge and retribution would take over. The International Tribunal had begun issuing indictments to suspects responsible for the genocide and that would have an important psychological effect. However, the internal justice system was not working and the Government needed to be galvanized into re-establishing the judiciary.

If the situation in Burundi worsened and there was more killing, the spill-over was bound to affect Rwanda, he said. Although there were differences between the two countries, the international community should not delude itself that even a small explosion in Burundi would have no affect on its neighbour. Given the current serious situation in Burundi, tensions in the refugee camps would be alleviated by some kind of international presence whether it was guards, human rights monitors or some other presence, he added.

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Amnesty International should expand its areas of concern to include socio-economic and cultural rights, particularly the right to development, in light of the Vienna Declaration adopted by the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, Cuba told the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations yesterday. The Committee, which is meeting at United Nations Headquarters, was reviewing quadrennial reports of organizations with consultative status with the Economic and Social Council.

The representative of China said that Amnesty International should objectively reflect the status of human rights in the world and pay attention to the overall situation of those rights in the United Nations. Other non-governmental organizations dealing with human rights in the United Nations should make the same effort. Indonesia said that as Amnesty International had acknowledged all human rights were interlinked and indivisible, it should be

asked to purvey economic rights. The United Kingdom, the United States and Ireland said it would be inappropriate to ask a non-governmental organization to broaden its area of interest unless its members decided to do so. Moreover, Amnesty International was not a party to the Vienna Declaration.

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Concern has been expressed over shrinking funds for rehabilitation programmes worldwide, by the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Commission for Social Development on Disability, Bengt Lindqvist, who is also the former Swedish Minister for Social Development. He was speaking at a meeting in Geneva last week, between the Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO), Dr. Hiroshi Nakajima and representatives from leading international disabled persons' organizations.

Mr. Lindqvist, who is blind, said the disability community worldwide was concerned over declining resources for international programmes aimed at the medical and social rehabilitation of disabled people. Governments must ensure that such programmes continued. He stressed that, in comparison with other citizens, disabled people had a lower level of eduction, lower income and higher rates of unemployment. They were being unjustly marginalized in all societies. A WHO-developed concept of community-based rehabilitation has gained international recognition as an effective strategy to help the social integration of people with disabilities.

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